

NEW STORY OF CALCROFT SCHOOL!

TWO LONG, COMPLETE STORIES!

The

Boys' Realm.



FULHAM'S FORWARDS SWARMED ROUND THE PROSTRATE GOALKEEPER; BUT HE MANAGED TO RISE, AND, SHOULDERING OFF HIS OPPONENTS, RAN ONWARD WITH THE BALL. INSTANTLY THE WHISTLE BLEW.

STORIES OF SPORT & ADVENTURE.

EVERY SATURDAY—ONE PENNY.

overlooked one trifling fact. The water could not stay in the tree all the time. Much of it dripped on the umbrella, and much of it trickled along the branches and down the trunk.

This the umbrella failed to keep off, and it pattered merrily down the backs of Horatio and Alphonse.

Mr. Pycroft paced up and down the master's room quite pale with suspense. He had sent Pye, Manners, and Ramandra Jal to bed, for which these three young gentlemen blessed him—backwards.

Bindley and Fane, whom he had kept with him for company, were evincing signs of weariness and boredom. The fire had almost gone out, and the two juniors had yawned forty-seven times in thirteen minutes by the clock.

"If they ain't half-way to Jericho by this time, they've either bust, or the petrol has run out," muttered Bindley. "Silly merchants! I'd sooner be in my cot than here. Sleepy, Lion?"

"Course I am. Ain't there any giddy news yet?"

It came a second later with a rasping rattle of the telephone that knocked large holes in the silence. Mr. Pycroft jumped, and Bindley, equally startled, knocked his head against the back of his chair.

Mr. Pycroft took up the receiver.

"Ahoy—ahoy—ahoy!" came the growl. "What vessel are that? Are that craft Calcroft School, sink me?"

"Yes, yes—good gracious, yes!" cried Mr. Pycroft.

"It was fair weather, shipmet, and heast winds do not blow, swab me!" growled the voice. "Ahoy! We was Admiral Barbary, sir. Me and my mate, swab him, was a cruizin', when we sights a wreck. It was a vessel from your port. So we rescue the crew, d'ye see, and land 'em at the cross roads, where they is waitin' all snug to be took off by you, swab me."

"You mean," said Mr. Pycroft, in some perplexity, "that you have found—er—the two wretched boys that ran away in a motor-car? I—er—hardly understand you. Pray wait one moment. Fane, pray speak to this man!"

Fane grasped the truth at once, for the fog-horn accents of Mr. Tanks and his bewildering jargon alike did not puzzle him.

"The car broke down, sir," he explained. "The admiral's men could not bring Perks and De Bompert home, so they gave them a lift as far as the cross roads, and tied them to a tree. Shall Bindley and I go for them, sir?"

"You shall, Fane," answered Mr. Pycroft grimly, "but not alone. It is my intention to accompany you."

Presently they were braving the rain and darkness. The road was a quagmire. Mr. Pycroft skated and skidded and slopped and splashed, but he struggled on heroically.

Had Constable Blagg fulfilled the duties for which the ratepayers provided him with a weekly salary, Alphonse and Horatio would have been discovered much earlier, for they were on Blagg's beat.

Mr. Blagg, however, was a strong believer in waiting till the clouds roll by, and he was asleep in the barn, shaking its rafters with his snores.

"Good gracious!" gasped Mr. Pycroft, wading a puddle. "The—er—distance seems interminable. Shall we—er—never be—"

"We're there now. I can see the light, sir," said Bindley. "Hallo—hall-all-oa!"

"Help—help—help! I entreat you to come to our aid!" implored a weak voice.

Then Bindley and Fane doubled themselves up, choking with laughter. There in the bright glow of the motor lamp, safely tied to a tree, they beheld the soaked, limp, and bedraggled figures of kidnapper and kidnapped.

"Aha! Oho!" hissed Mr. Pycroft. "Excellent indeed!"

THE 10th CHAPTER.

In Which Mr. Pycroft, who Considers the Sight of Rate Sufficiently Serious, is Flabbergasted by Beholding Snakes.

DAUNTLESS Alphonse and brave Horatio were sent to the sanatorium, and placed under the tender care of Mrs. Kinter, the matron. Mrs. Kinter when she chose could exercise a care almost as tender as a steak cut from an india-rubber elephant would be.

The matron had never been madly fond of Horatio, and at first sight she took a violent dislike to Alphonse.

Both boys had taken cold, as was only natural. For a week their handsome faces were not seen ornamenting quadrangle, classrooms, study, or dining-hall; but no one seemed heartbroken at their absence.

A cheque from Paris satisfied the owner of the stolen and damaged car, and Calcroft settled down in earnest, to the mingled joys and sorrows of another term.

With his mortar-board on the back of his head, Mr. Pycroft pranced across the quadrangle from an early visit to his friend Mr. Kunwit.

Little Beelby—greedy Beelby—had, after much haggling, bought a white rat from Timbory for twopence and a forged Tasmanian stamp.

Beelby had purchased it to sell at a profit, not to keep, for he detested all kinds of pets. He had the rat on his shoulder, when his horrified ears detected the housemaster's brisk tread.

Rats, wild or tame, were Mr. Pycroft's horror and abomination. Like lightning Beelby whipped the little, pink-eyed creature from his shoulder and dropped it into the

nearest desk, which happened to belong to Haik. He was just in time.

"Wait, Beelby!" said Mr. Pycroft. "You will do as well as anybody. Do not go away."

"I wish you'd go away!" groaned Beelby. "Oh, my hat! What if the giddy thing starts to squeak?"

The only thing that squeaked was the master's quill-pen as it scrawled over the sheet. The note was for Mrs. Kinter. Mr. Pycroft always wrote to the lady when possible. He was afraid of her, and avoided personal interviews.

"Give this to the matron, Beelby, and bring that French boy with you. I do not wish to see Perks. Let him go direct to his own house. And kindly brush your hair; you are a veritable little grub. How dare you face me with a head like a porcupine?"

Beelby fled, and, standing with his back to the fire, Mr. Pycroft pondered. He had learned from the doctor that Alphonse had acted quite like a rational being during his detention in the sanatorium.

He did not like the idea of punishing any new boy, especially a foreigner. He took out a letter he had received from Monsieur Alphonse de Bompert senior, to whom he had written.

"Ha-hum! Rather excitable—eh? Not aware of any previous behaviour before?" muttered the housemaster. "The boy is quite competent to drive a car. Tut, tut! Written to him sternly about future conduct. To be sure. Well, now—eh?"

Mr. Pycroft glanced up sharply from the letter. He fancied he heard an unusual sound. He had, as a matter of fact, for there were more things in Haik's desk than lesson-books, rulers, and pens. The rat took no interest in the books, but the intelligent creature was taking a deep interest in the contents of a paper-bag which contained a couple of mince-pies.

"A most clever and excellent letter for a Frenchman to—er—concoct in English," said Mr. Pycroft. "Really, a most— Eh? Good gracious!"

The rat had got to work on the bag. He had never tasted mince-pie, but he liked the smell. The paper was rather tough. Mr. Pycroft craned his neck. The rustling sound grew louder. Though short-sighted, he had nothing wrong with his hearing. He tiptoed along the line of desks, and quickly located the one from which rustling, scraping noises came. Cautiously he raised the lid.

"A rat—an abominable rodent!" gasped Mr. Pycroft. "Whose desk is this? Ah, Haik's, I see! Very good, Haik—very good, sir!"

Not once, but a dozen times, had Mr. Pycroft sternly forbidden the juniors to smuggle any description of livestock into the school. He took up his cane and made it whistle through the air. He felt for his handkerchief in order to wipe his hand and obtain a better grip.

"Bother!" he said, for no handkerchief was to be found. "This will—er—necessitate a long climb to my bed-room."

Haik's luck was dead out that morning. Mr. Pycroft had to pass the study which that hapless junior shared with his cronies Reffel and Sargent. They had now been saddled with Alphonse. Mr. Pycroft knocked, as was his usual custom. He received no reply, and opened the door. Oddly enough, it was Haik's birthday. His loving relations had sent him a hamper and a hatbox containing a new silk hat. These presents had only arrived the previous night, and in his haste to find out whether there was an envelope containing money anywhere, Haik had dragged out a collection of collars, ties, socks, jars of jam, and bottles of preserved fruits, which he had left in a most disorderly array.

"A disgraceful study—a disgusting place!" said Mr. Pycroft. "Very good, Haik—very good— Aha!"

Again Mr. Pycroft heard a rustling sound, and that sound emanated from the hatbox, which bore Haik's initials. It was a very nice hatbox, and there was a key in the lock. Mr. Pycroft turned the key, withdrew it, and placed it in his waistcoat-pocket. Then, with a thunderclap on his brow, he strode back to the class-room as the bell rang.

The boys trooped in, most of them red, rosy, and short of breath after hot rag at football. Haik took his seat smilingly; for Haik didn't know, and ignorance was bliss in his case. Last of all came Beelby, quaking in his shoes, with Alphonse de Bompert behind him.

"Where's old Ramandra Jal, kid?" Bindley whispered to Fane. "He's an ass to be late. Pycroft has got 'em this morning."

"Silence! Step up to my desk, boy!" thundered Mr. Pycroft. "Sit down, Beelby! What do you mean, sir?"—this to Alphonse.

Alphonse obeyed with the meekness of a pet lamb. Beelby collapsed. He had been trying to pass a note to Haik.

"De Bompert," said Mr. Pycroft, with dreadful calmness, "listen intently. I shall speak slowly, for I understand that you have only a limited knowledge of the English tongue. I am willing to overlook, to forgive, to pardon your very amazing—er—conduct. But do not repeat it, sir, or do it again, or I will thr-r-rash you soundly!"

"Bother it all!" murmured Bindley uneasily. "Where's that little idiot Jal? He'll get it hot!"

"Fifty lines for inattention, Bindley!" said Mr. Pycroft. "Remain where you are, De Bompert. Silence!"

Mr. Pycroft struck the desk with his cane and glared round him.

(This fine story will be continued next Saturday.)

IN BORROWED PLUMES.

A FOOTBALL STORY.

BY A VERY POPULAR AUTHOR.

George Snope Gets a Grand Idea Into His Head.

"FOOTBALL!" said George Henry Snope, with a sniff. "Talking football again!"

He surveyed the animated party with deep disgust.

They were making quite a fuss of Arthur Young—a ridiculous fuss, in George Henry Snope's opinion. Arthur was captain of the Holmdale Rovers, and he had kicked the winning goal against Lynford that afternoon. Holmdale was only a little town, but it took football seriously, and Arthur Young was quite a local hero—a hero especially in the eyes of Clara Northcote, who listened intently to every word that fell from the lips of the young captain as he described the match.

Mr. Northcote, a leading manufacturer in Holmdale, was a patron of the football club, and Arthur, who held a good position in the town, was on the best of terms with the family at Northcote Lodge, much to the disgust of George Henry Snope. George Henry was Mr. Northcote's secretary, and the leading traits in his character were two—a dislike and contempt for all kinds of sport, and a great love and admiration for himself, George Henry Snope. Why charming Clara Northcote should show such a frank, cordial friendship to Arthur Young, and reserve her chilliest politeness for himself, was a profound puzzle to Mr. Snope. He sniffed now as he came upon the group surrounding the young footballer, and hanging upon his words.

"What they can see in him," said Mr. Snope to himself, "and what they can see in that rough, brutal game, passes my comprehension."

Evidently they did see something in Arthur, and in the game he played. The captain of Holmdale was giving an animated description of the match, passing very lightly over his own performances. George Henry, seeing how Clara followed every word, and how she did not even observe his presence, dropped into a chair, with a discontented frown, and wondered.

"They were pressing us hard," Arthur Young was saying. "It looked like a goal for them, and that would have settled us, for there would never have been time for another. But one of our backs cleared luckily, and sent the ball to midfield, and then the forwards got away with it—"

"You mean one forward got away with it, Arthur," said Mr. Northcote. "You forget I was there, my boy. The centre-forward got away with it, dribbled it right up to the Lynford goal, and sent it in with the best shot I have seen this season."

Arthur coloured and laughed.

"Thank you!" he said. "I was lucky, you know."

"Nonsense! There was no luck about it; it was first-class footer," said Mr. Northcote. "And the whole town are proud of you, Arthur. Isn't that so, Snope?" he added, turning to George Henry with a mischievous smile, for he well knew his secretary's weakness. "Wasn't it a glorious victory, one for everybody to be proud of?"

"No—yes," said George Henry dubiously. With a dozen pairs of eyes on him, and Clara's in particular, he dared not express his favourite opinions. And a new idea had come into his head as he watched the rapt attention in the girl's face while Arthur was talking. "Quite so," he went on, more decidedly. "It was a great game, by all accounts. I wish I had seen it. I'm thinking of taking up football myself."

"Oh, do, Mr. Snope!" said Clara ecstatically. "I am sure all Holmdale would like to see you on the football field."

Mr. Snope looked gratified. He was not very keen of apprehension, and did not detect the lurking smile on the girl's face.

The idea was still running in his head when he left Northcote Lodge and took his homeward way.

"By Jove, it's a good idea!" said Mr. Snope to himself—"a jolly good idea! Clara is simply gone on football, and she admires that fellow Young so much simply because he plays the idiotic game passably well. Why shouldn't I cut him out? I can't play footer, and I don't intend to try, not much. But it's a good idea, and they can never bowl me out!"

He reflected deeply upon the plan, whatever it was, that had come into his mind, and by the time he reached his diggings his thin, narrow face was illumined with satisfaction.

In his rooms he opened his pocket-book, and took out a letter which he had received that morning, and ran his eye over it again.

"Dear George," it ran, "although I am aware of your prejudice against the grand old game, I should like to see you here at Carford for this afternoon's match. I have got into the team at last, and shall play for Carford, and I hope to put up a good game. If you like to run over, I hope you'll see me kick goals for Carford. Now, come, if you can."

"Your affectionate cousin,
"G. H. SNOPE."

George Henry grinned over the letter. He had not gone that afternoon, and had not even replied to the letter, but he now sat down to do so.

"It will work," he muttered; "it can't fail. They may wonder at first, but that's all. G. H. Snope plays for Carford Rangers, and I'm G. H. Snope, and that settles it."

A few days later Mr. Northcote referred to George Henry's declared intention of taking up football. George Henry replied that he had already done so.

"Where do you practise?" asked Mr. Northcote.

"Well, I haven't done much practice yet, but I've run over to the Carford ground once or twice."

"Carford! What on earth should you go over to Carford for?"

"My native town, sir. Of course, when I play seriously I shall have to play for my native town."

"Ah, yes, I suppose so!" said Mr. Northcote doubtfully.

"Besides, there's no room for me in the Holmdale eleven," said George Henry shaking his head. "I won't say anything against Mr. Young, but I don't think he would welcome a new player who would outshine himself."

Mr. Northcote coughed.

"It would be hard to find such a player in Holmdale," he remarked. "Don't be an ass, Snope!"

"I hope to convince you, sir, that I shall be worthy to wear the colours of any town," said George Henry, with dignity. And Mr. Northcote said that he hoped so, too, but that he had his doubts.

Clara also took an interest in Mr. Snope's football. She frequently asked him about it, not without a mischievous smile. George Henry gave her vague accounts, but at last he made a definite announcement that amazed her.

"Are you coming to the match this afternoon?" she asked him casually, one Saturday.

Mr. Snope shook his head, with an important air.

"No, Miss Northcote. I have to play over at Carford."

"Play—in a match?" she ejaculated, surveying Mr. Snope's lanky, weedy figure in amazement.

"Yes, against Muggleford Throstles."

"You are not joking, Mr. Snope?"

"My dear Miss Northcote!"

"Excuse me. But I can't help being surprised. You have picked up the game marvellously quickly," said Clara.

Mr. Snope smiled.

"There is little to learn in a game like football," he said. "I soon mastered it. I should have liked to play for Holmdale, but it would have created jealousy; and, besides, my fellow-townsmen have the first claim. They asked me to play when they found out my form, and I couldn't refuse."

Clara was amazed, and as soon as she met Arthur Young she told him about the wondrous news. Arthur grinned sceptically.

"Well, I don't like doubting anybody's word," he remarked; "and, of course, we may have been entertaining an angel unawares all this time. Snope may be a Steve Bloomer in disguise; but until I've seen it I can't help having some doubts."

"But the Carford matches are always reported in the local paper," said Clara. "It will be easy to get one, and to prove or disprove Mr. Snope's statement."

Arthur looked puzzled.

"That's true enough," he said. "I can't understand a fellow telling a lie that can be bowled out so easily. There may be something in it."

Now, neither Arthur nor Clara liked to take steps to get the Carford local newspaper, feeling that it savoured of espial; but, as Arthur said, if George Henry's doings were really reported in it, he would be certain to let them see a copy. Meanwhile, Clara awaited her next meeting with Mr. Snope with keen interest. She saw him on Monday, and asked him the result of the match.

"Oh, we won!" said George Henry off-handedly. "The Throstles were in fine form, but we went one better. We beat them by five goals to four."

"Did you kick any of the goals?"

"You must not ask me to blow my own trumpet, Miss Northcote," said George Henry modestly. "If you are interested to see about the match, I'll have the 'Carford Gazette' sent to you, with the report."

"Oh, please do!" said Clara.

And George Henry did. The paper was opened by Mr. Northcote in the presence of Clara and Arthur Young. Arthur read out the report, with a face full of wonder:

"The home team beat Muggleford Throstles by five goals to four. The winning goal was kicked by George H. Snope, who was also responsible for two of the earlier ones, thus performing the hat trick. In this young player we do not hesitate to say that Carford has discovered a treasure."

"They call him a young player," said Arthur. "I suppose it means he's new to the game. Snope's over thirty, anyway. Fancy that weedy boulder playing up like this!"

BORROWED PLUMES.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"You ought not to call him a weedy bouncer," said Clara. "We have all misjudged him. You know the reputation of the Throstles, and Mr. Snope has done wonders."

"I admit," said Arthur honestly, "I can't understand it; but there it is in black and white, and there's no getting away from that. Sorry I didn't get him into the Holmdale team now. We can do with a player like that."

And he congratulated George Henry heartily when he met him again. Mr. Snope received his congratulations meekly enough. He said that he knew he had been always misunderstood, but that he was glad the Holmdalers were now finding out his true quality.

Arthur shrugged his shoulders. He was more than ever mystified, but there seemed to be no doubting the truth of Mr. Snope's claims to be considered as a footballer.

And now came about the change George Henry had calculated upon. Clara Northcote felt that she had treated him harshly. She had always concealed her contempt for the weedy, lackadaisical fellow who affected to sneer at manlier men than himself, but she had always felt it. Now she felt that she had despised him unjustly. He had only been hiding his light under a bushel, and, put to the test, he had come out with real brilliance.

And so, by gracious kindness, she sought to make amends, raising all sorts of hopes in George Henry's heart, and all sorts of jealous fears in Arthur's. Mr. Snope felt that he was going ahead, that it was only a question of time before he completely cut out the captain of Holmdale Rovers.

He counted upon certain success now, and gleefully anticipated his victory. And Arthur made matters worse for himself by treating George Henry very off-handedly. The bumptious manners of Snope got on his nerves, he said; but Clara seemed to think that envy had something to do with it.

"You are coming down to the match?" Arthur asked, one Saturday afternoon a few weeks later, as he met Miss Northcote with George Henry.

The girl shook her head. "I was thinking of driving over to Carford, to see Mr. Snope play Lynford," she said. "You know, he is Carford captain now."

A look of sudden alarm came into Mr. Snope's face. Arthur was looking at him, and he saw that the prospect of Clara coming over to the match at Carford was far from pleasing to George Henry.

"Oh, very well!" said Arthur, much hurt. He had always regarded Clara's presence at the Holmdale home matches as a matter of course.

"Not at all; I couldn't think of it!" said Mr. Snope hastily. "It won't be much of a match at Carford to-day; and—and—I know, I'll come to see Young play, Miss Northcote, to you where the play doesn't come up to the Carford standard. I haven't seen a Holmdale match for a long time."

"Why doesn't he want Clara to see him at Carford?" muttered Arthur to himself. "Is it possible there's any humbug about it, after all? My hat, if he comes to the Holmdale ground to-day, I'll put him to the test!"

Miss Northcote, who had not fully intended to leave Arthur in the lurch that afternoon, assented to George Henry's proposition; and when the enclosure at the Holmdale ground filled up that afternoon, Clara and George Henry were there at the front.

The kick-off was to be at three. Holmdale were playing Ranthorpe Rangers, a team not at all up to their mark, and Arthur anticipated an easy victory. He came up to George Henry and Miss Northcote at a quarter to three.

"I want you to do us a favour, Mr. Snope," he said seriously.

"Certainly!" said George Henry.

"Thanks! It's lucky for us at this juncture that you've taken up footer and made such a success of it."

"I don't quite understand you," said Mr. Snope, rather uneasily.

"We're a man short."

George Henry's jaw fell.

"Chapman hasn't turned up!" exclaimed Arthur. He did not explain that Chapman had stayed away at his own special request.

"We want a forward in his place. It's a bit of luck you being here, Snope!"

"I should be glad to, but—"

"Of course, you will pick your own position!" said Arthur. "You play inside-right over at Carford, don't you? I'll put Blount outside, and give you his place."

The sweat stood in big drops on Mr. Snope's brow.

"I'm sorry—" he stammered.

Arthur looked at him in astonishment.

"You're not going to refuse?" he exclaimed.

"I'm afraid I must."

"Why?"

"You see, I haven't my football things here."

"It isn't five minutes to your diggings. I'll send a chap up to fetch them."

"But—you're really very kind, but—"

"Now, this is too bad!" exclaimed Arthur, turning a distressed countenance upon Clara Northcote, who was regarding George Henry in amazement. "Here we are, a man short, and here's Snope, the best amateur footballer in the county, and he won't play for us. What do you think of that, Miss Northcote?"

Clara frowned.

"Mr. Snope!" she exclaimed. "Surely you cannot be serious; you cannot intend to refuse!"

"I—I'd oblige if I could!" stammered George Henry, wishing the earth would open and swallow him. "But—but I really don't feel fit just now, and—and—"

"I see; it's stage-fright," said Arthur—"that's all. You'll play. Of course, you couldn't possibly refuse. Thanks!" Without waiting for Mr. Snope to reply, he shouted to his comrades: "It's all right, chaps. Snope's volunteered!"

"Bravo, Snope!" shouted the Holmdale footballers.

"But—but I haven't—"

"And now about getting your things," said Arthur. "There's no time to lose."

"But I haven't—"

"I'll send a man at once," continued Arthur, taking not the slightest notice of George Henry's feeble expostulations.

Mr. Snope's face suddenly brightened.

"All right," he exclaimed; "don't trouble!"

Strangers in the crowd looked at the inside-right, and asked what it was, and what it was allowed on the ground for. And they gasped when they were told that it was a footballer and an embryo Bloomer. They said that appearances were against George Henry, and certainly the Holmdale folk had to admit as much.

The whistle blew, and the visitors kicked off.

They started the game with rushing tactics, but Holmdale soon drove them back. The home forwards bore down into the visitors' half, passing the ball with beautiful precision—till it was passed to George Henry. When it came to him from the centre, he hadn't the faintest notion in the world what to do with it.

The ball dropped fairly at his feet, and he stared at it, and a grinning Ranger half took it away and sent it to midfield. The crowd gave a yell.

"What's the matter with Snope?"

"Chuck him out!"

"You silly ass!" shouted Arthur Young.

"What did you let him do that for?"

"How was I to stop him?" exclaimed George Henry sulkily. But Arthur was not stopping to listen; he was busy. The Rangers were stopped short of the home goal. The ball was brought back into their half, and again the attack was forced home. The Rangers fell back to defend their goal, and the Rovers pressed them hard.

Again the ball came to George Henry. It came to him on the chin, and laid him flat on his back. As he lay dazed, the field swept over him, and the Rangers, respite, rushed the ball over the half-way line.

George Henry staggered to his feet.

He was shaken and bruised, and his nice new

The astounded Ranger reeled away, more startled than hurt, and his comrades gave a roar of rage. There was a yell for the referee, and the whistle went shrilly. For that smack had been dealt within the dreaded penalty area, and there was no contesting that the Rangers were entitled to a penalty-kick.

Arthur Young gasped with mingled rage and laughter. The kick was taken, and there was a shout from the Rangers backers in the crowd.

"Goal!"

As the teams walked back to the centre of the field, Arthur Young took George Henry Snope by the arm. Snope looked at him stupidly.

"Look here," said Arthur, in a low voice, "you're a thundering humbug. You've never played football before in your life!"

And George Henry, dazed, bewildered, and feeling that not even for Clara Northcote's sake could he go through the rest of that dreadful game, gasped out the truth.

"No; I haven't. Let me get off the field, for mercy's sake!"

"Then if you're not captain of Carford, who is?"

"My cousin, George Herbert Snope."

Arthur gave a whistle.

"Oh, I see! You horrible humbug!"

"Let me get away. I'll never do it again. I'll always tell the truth. Only let me get off the field before they start kicking that fearful ball about again!" implored George Henry.

Arthur Young grinned.

"You humbug! You sham! You daw in borrowed plumes!"

"I'll never do it again. Lemme go. They're just going to—"

Arthur let go his arm.

"Cut it!"

Mr. Snope needed no second bidding.

Like an arrow he flew for the exit, and disappeared. The Rovers, a man short—which was a distinct advantage in this case—kicked off again. They managed to equalise before half-time. No longer cumbered by the terrible George Henry, they showed their quality. After the interval they bucked up with a will, and the only other goal scored was taken by Arthur Young for the Holmdale Rovers.

The Rovers went off the field winners of the match by two goals to one, and their backers cheered them heartily, as they deserved. When Arthur joined Clara Northcote, the girl was looking puzzled. She did not know what to make of Mr. Snope's remarkable play, or of his sudden disappearance from the ranks of the Rovers.

"What ever has become of Mr. Snope?" she exclaimed. "And is it possible that he played like that for Carford?"

Arthur laughed.

"He's gone," he said. "I sent him off the field so that he shouldn't lose us the match; and for his own sake, poor beggar! He is about the biggest humbug I ever heard of, but I think he's had his punishment."

And he explained. Clara listened in wonder.

"What a wicked—wicked story-teller!" she exclaimed indignantly. "I shall tell him what I think of him when I see him again."

But Clara did not see him again.

George Henry Snope reached his diggings that day sore in body and in mind. He was aching in every limb, but his bodily aches were not so bad as his anticipation of what was to follow. He felt that he could not face the overwhelming chaff and ridicule which would greet him now that the truth was out. He wrote to Mr. Northcote resigning his position, and the next day Holmdale knew him no more.

It cannot be said that he was missed very much. After he was gone, Arthur Young came to a satisfactory understanding with Clara. And they could never speak of George Henry Snope and his performances upon the football-field without laughing. Wherever George Henry wanders, it is safe to say that he will never be found upon the soccer field again, or masquerading as a footballer in borrowed plumes.

THE END.

(Another fine football story on Saturday next.)

Don't Miss

"SEXTON BLAKE IN THE CONGO,"

which starts in

"THE BOYS' FRIEND"

ON TUESDAY NEXT.



The penalty kick was taken, and there was a shout from the Rangers' backers in the crowd. "Goal!"

I'll fetch them myself, and I'll be back before three."

Arthur Young read his thoughts as clearly as if they were written in his face.

He intended to pretend to fetch the things, and keep away from the ground, and turn up after the match with some plausible excuse.

"Right-ho!" said Arthur, with a beautiful expression of unsuspiciousness. "I'll come with you, Snope. We shall have to hustle, so I'll race you to your digs."

The unhappy Arthur groaned in spirit. Arthur passed an arm through his, and ran him almost off his legs. George Henry was breathless and gasping when, after a pelt of three minutes, they reached the lodgings. There was a delay, owing to Mr. Snope having lost his key; but Arthur hammered at the door, and it was soon opened, and he ran Mr. Snope up to his room.

He groaned inwardly as he dressed, hurried continually by Arthur, who asked him about a dozen times if he was trying to be late for the match. He was dressed at last, and the Holmdale captain accompanied him back to the ground. It was five minutes to three when they entered the pavilion.

The unhappy recruit threw off his ulster. His skinny, weedy figure was not exactly that of a footballer, and his breathless, wheezy condition did not impart to him the aspect of an athlete. The other fellows looked at him in amazement. Was this animated scarecrow the champion of Carford? What did it all mean, anyhow?

"Come on, chaps!" exclaimed Arthur Young, and the footballers turned out into the field.

The Rangers were already there, taking shots at goal with a practice ball. The teams lined up, and the two captains tossed for choice of goals. As the adversaries faced one another, it could be seen that the home team were the better lot, with the exception of George Henry.

football rig-out, which he had bought for appearance sake, and, as a matter of fact, had never worn before, was soiled and muddy from top to toe. He limped after the Rovers, groaning to himself.

This was football!

And he had been idiot enough to be inveigled into playing it.

George Henry could have kicked himself hard at that moment, only he considered that he had been already sufficiently kicked.

The game had surged away right up to the home goal; George Henry, in the Rangers' half, was a solitary and conspicuous figure. The crowd gave him a good deal of attention, not of a complimentary kind.

"Hallo, Calves!"

"Taking a rest there, Bones?"

"Thinks he's Robinson Crusoe."

"He don't know where he are, for a cert."

There was a rush of feet, a surge of players. The ball was coming back amid a press of players, and suddenly George Henry was in the midst of them. A Ranger back collided with him, and he went down, and the defenders surged past him. On came the Rovers with the ball. George Henry staggered up, and ran. He did not know or care whither, his only thought being to escape from that rough crowd. He made straight for the Holmdale goal, as it happened, and the crowd watched him with amusement and wonder.

A roar, a rush of feet behind him. The Ranger forwards were on the ball, and breaking through Holmdale, they brought it up the field. George Henry rushed on blindly, but the Rangers were faster. A forward, dribbling the ball, passed him, and shouldered him aside. George Henry's temper had stood many trials in the last half-hour. That was the last straw. He reached out and gave the offending forward a sounding smack on the side of the head.